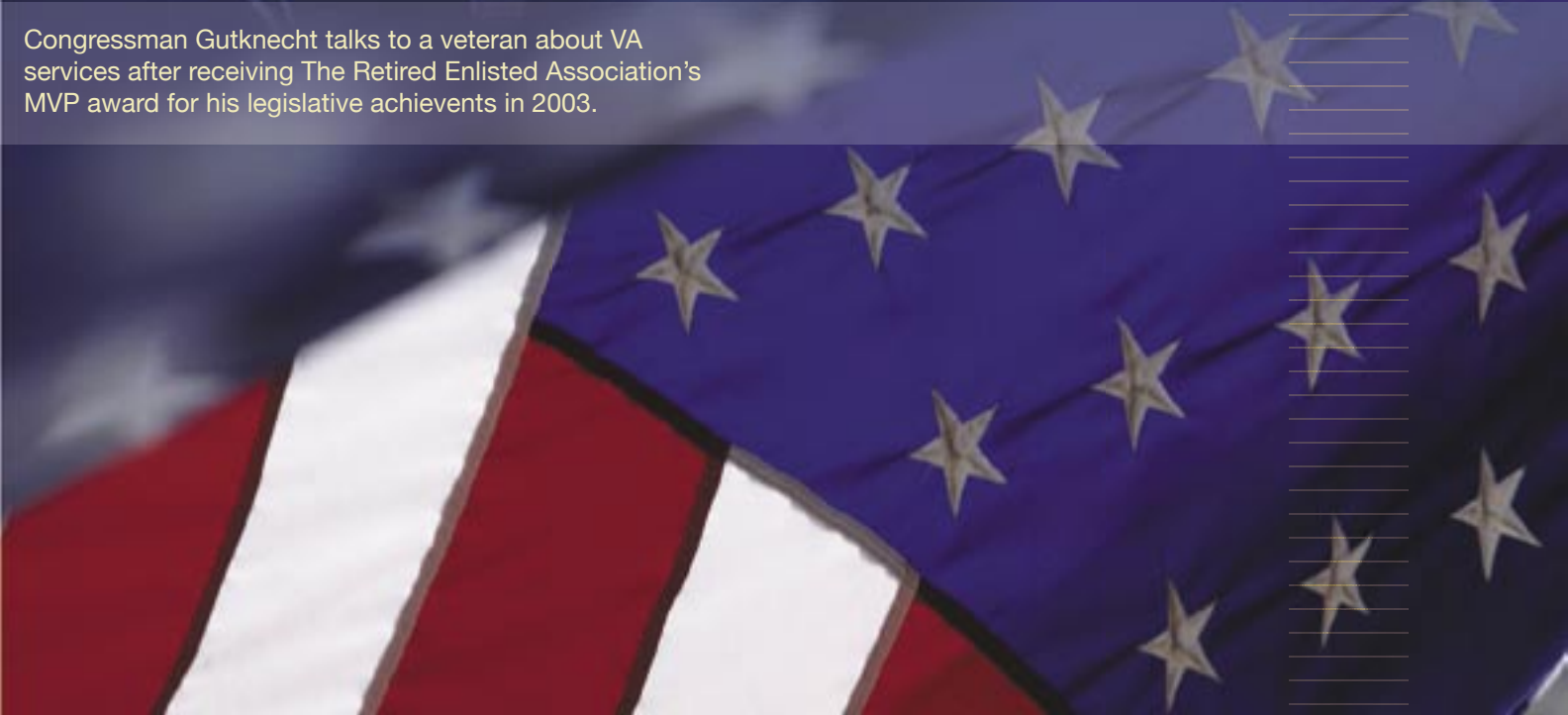


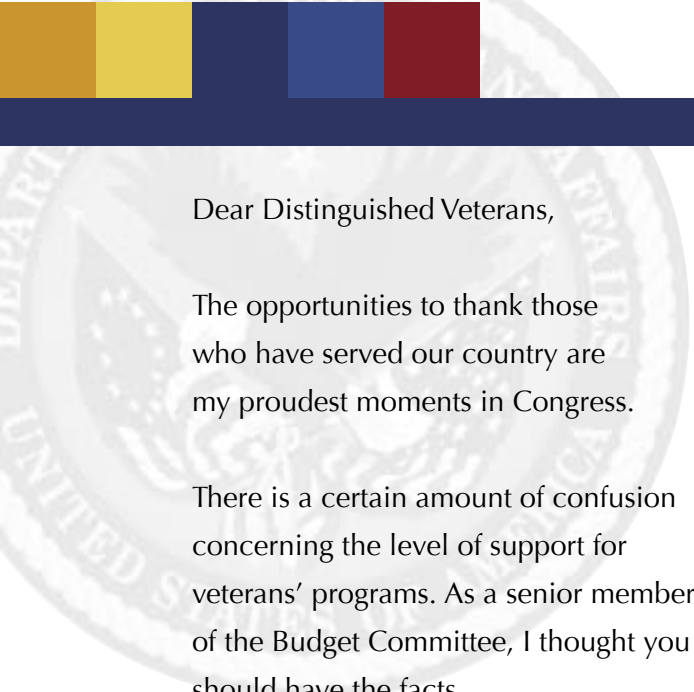



OUR SOLDIERS.  
OUR VETERANS.

*Our Heroes.*

Congressman Gutknecht talks to a veteran about VA services after receiving The Retired Enlisted Association's MVP award for his legislative achievements in 2003.





Dear Distinguished Veterans,

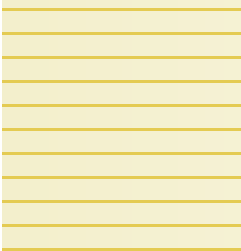
The opportunities to thank those who have served our country are my proudest moments in Congress.

There is a certain amount of confusion concerning the level of support for veterans' programs. As a senior member of the Budget Committee, I thought you should have the facts.

Please take a few minutes to review the following information. While there is always room for improvement, I hope you will agree Congress is doing its best to keep our promises to veterans.

Sincerely,

Gil Gutknecht  
Member of Congress



425 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
202.225.2472

1530 Greenview Drive SW, #108  
Rochester, MN 55902  
800.862.8632 507.252.9841

109 East 2nd Street  
Fairmont, MN 56031  
507.238.2835

[www.gil.house.gov](http://www.gil.house.gov)  
[gil@mail.house.gov](mailto:gil@mail.house.gov)



Please feel free to visit

**[www.gil.house.gov](http://www.gil.house.gov)** to read

and sign up for Gil's E-Line,  
a weekly update via e-mail.

Also, check out station times and  
information for Gil's **radio shows**,  
featuring your chance to call in  
with questions.

# A history...

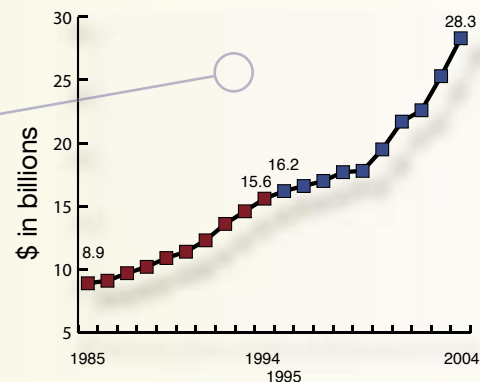
*Since I came to Congress in 1995:*

- \* Spending for veterans' medical care has increased by 75 percent
- \* The total budget for veterans' programs has increased by 58 percent
- \* The number of veterans receiving care has increased from 2.5 million to 4.7 million – an 87 percent increase
- \* Monthly education benefit payment levels under the Montgomery GI Bill have more than doubled – from \$405 to \$985
- \* The total per veteran spending has increased from \$1,368 to \$2,443 – a 79 percent increase

The House-passed budget resolution provides a significant increase to veterans spending, on top of the hefty increases of the past few years.

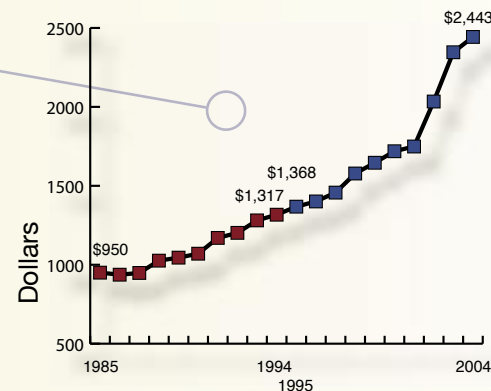
The House and Senate have reached an agreement on veterans spending, with the Senate committing to raise its numbers to the House's more generous levels. This budget continues our commitment to those who have served their country with pride, dignity and valor.

## Total Budget Authority for Veterans' Medical Care Before and After 1995



Note: 74.9% increase 1985 to 1994;  
75.2% increase 1995 to 2004

## Spending Per Veteran, 1985-2004



Note: 38.6% increase 1985 to 1994;  
78.9% increase 1995 to 2004

Source: House Budget Committee

Below: Congressman Gutknecht discusses the war in Iraq with returning members of Rochester's 79th Military Police unit (left) as well as area veterans (right).



The news is good for veterans medical care as well. In 1996 and 1999, Congress expanded eligibility for veterans medical care. As a result, the number of veterans using VA services today has almost doubled. As you've seen, the House budget provides significant increases – money that will be used for medical care, prosthetic research and more. At the same time, veterans assume none of the user fees or prescription drug co-payment increases you may have heard about.

Recent legislation will allow those activated for more than 179 days to make penalty-free early withdrawals from IRAs or pension funds. Repayment is encouraged within two years of ending active duty with the contribution cap lifted up to the amount of the withdrawn funds. Those ordered or called to active duty after September 11, 2001, and before September 12, 2005, are eligible.

When we ask guard members and reservists to make significant sacrifices, we must also give them the flexibility to take care of personal responsibilities.

Below: Congressman Gutknecht meets with soldiers at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo (top), and, with Congressman Mark Kennedy, discusses foreign policy with Albania's Defense Minister (bottom).



I have had the honor of meeting several young people who have returned from Iraq. My thoughts and prayers remain with those who have sacrificed so much in defense of freedom.

In February, I visited Minnesota soldiers serving at Eagle Base, Bosnia and Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo. I brought letters and valentines from school children in Owatonna, Rochester and Winona.

Visiting with them gives me a greater appreciation of the blessings and freedoms we enjoy here in America. I am proud of the men and women who are strengthening democracy and freedom in the Balkans. They are doing an outstanding job, are proud of their service and are eagerly looking forward to their return.

Brave Americans in uniform continue to keep the lamp of liberty burning brightly throughout the world. War is always difficult and comes at great cost, but from the beaches of Normandy to the streets of Baghdad, we Americans have always sought to do what is right.

*"I salute Congress for being a strong partner in this historic effort to provide needed care to our nation's veterans."*

*-Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi, March 24, 2004  
from his letter in support of the House Budget Resolution*



**CONGRESSMAN GIL GUTKNECHT  
CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515**

*This mailing has been prepared, published  
and mailed at taxpayer expense.*

*Gil Gutknecht*

MC

*PRESORTED STANDARD*



*Printed on recycled paper  
with soybean-based ink.*